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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: MURDER OF INGUSHETIAN OPPOSITION FIGURE YEVLOYEV
INCITES WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells for
reason 1.4 (d).

1. (C) Summary. The August 31 murder of [www.ingushetia.ru](#) website owner Magomed Yevloyev, while in the custody of Ingushetian officials, sparked wide criticism within Russia and beyond its borders. While Ingushetian authorities remained relatively tacit, Kremlin leaders, opposition parties, human rights organizations, and journalists have called for a thorough investigation and just punishment for those responsible. Public outcry remained high in Nazran, with opposition leaders rallying the populace for the removal of Ingushetian President Zyazikov and threatening secession if Zyazikov refused to step down. We raised this case with Human Rights Ombudsman Lukin's office, which is monitoring the situation but is not directly engaged. On September 4, the Ambassador will address a Public Chamber meeting on the murder of journalists, and will take up the issue of Yevloyev.

Yevloyev Murdered Under Suspicious Circumstances

2. (SBU) On August 31, controversial Ingushetian figure and owner of the opposition website [www.ingushetia.ru](#) Magomed Yevloyev died as a result of a gunshot wound to the head, shortly after being detained by Interior Ministry personnel at the Nazran, Ingushetia airport. Yevloyev, a Moscow-based lawyer and former investigator in the Ingushetia Prosecutor's Office, had just disembarked from a Moscow flight on which Ingushetian President Murat Zyazikov was a fellow business class passenger, and some reports suggested that the two had a sharp exchange during the flight. Ingushetian Prosecutor Yuriy Turygin officially claimed that local police fatally wounded Magomed Yevloyev after one officer's pistol accidentally discharged, shooting Yevloyev in the head during Yevloyev's struggle with another officer for his gun. Subsequently, officers dumped (or delivered, depending on the version) a dying Yevloyev at the front of the local hospital where he passed away one hour later. The Investigative Committee of the General Procuracy then launched a criminal case on September 1 under Article 109 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code for "causing death through carelessness." Kaloy Akhilgov, a lawyer representing the interests of [www.ingushetia.ru](#), stated on September 1 that their organization intends to push for full criminal proceedings, classifying Yevloyev's death as an aggravated homicide.

3. (SBU) Yevloyev was no stranger to police and prosecution scrutiny before his murder. In August 2007, the North Ossetian Prosecutor's office requested the closure of his website for inciting inter-ethnic hatred, a request denied by the Russian Supreme Court. In fall 2007, the website's chief editor Roza Malsagova stepped down under pressure, subsequently receiving asylum in France. In spring 2008, Ingushetian authorities attempted to coerce Yevloyev's father to force his son to shut down the website, which he refused to do. In May 2008, the Ingushetia procuracy filed a

criminal proceeding against Yevloyev under charges of extremism for publishing an interview between a well-known Ingushetian entrepreneur (and former Lukoil vice president) and local opposition leader Musa Keligov. The interview, published in Moscow's "Vremya Novosti," noted the two leaders' sharp criticism of Ingushetian President and former Ingushetian FSB Chief Murat Zyazikov. Finally, in June 2008, a Moscow district court banned the website, a decision upheld in early August by the Moscow City Court. However, the site continued to function despite the court rulings.

Public Outcry

14. (SBU) Reports estimated between 500 and 3,000 people gathered in Nazran's city square for a protest -- led by former Ingushetia parliamentary deputy Bamat-Giri Mankiev and Ingushetia opposition representatives Mashkarii Aushev, Magomed Khazbayev, and Akhmed Kotiyev -- to criticize the republic's leaders, demanding a thorough investigation of the murder. Protest leaders squarely blamed Yevloyev's death on the Ingushetian FSB and Zyazikov. According to reports, anywhere from 1,000 to tens of thousands of supporters witnessed the transportation of Yevloyev's body through the streets of Nazran before his burial in a family cemetery in the village of Ekazhevo on September 1. Later that day, Akhilogov warned at the procession that, according to Ingushetian traditions, family members of Yevloyev vowed revenge on Zyazikov under a blood feud, in which a male member of the Ingushetian president's family would be killed. Khazbayev announced that opposition figures would hold a meeting on the future of Zyazikov immediately, and that they would not "bury the memory" of the deceased while Zyazikov

remained in power. Were Zyazikov not removed, the opposition representatives threatened to turn to "Europe and America" for the recognition of Ingushetia's secession from Russia.

15. (SBU) Ingushetian opposition leaders announced again their intention to collect petition signatures for the ousting of Zyazikov at the September 1 rally. On August 4, those same opposition leaders launched a petition calling for Zyazikov's removal and the restoration to full power of previous president Ruslan Aushev. They claimed that 80,000 Ingushetians supported the initiative (one-half of those with the right to vote) and requested a response from the government by September 4, though they had received nothing by the time of the murder. According to Moscow daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Zyazikov met with Medvedev on August 26 to discuss several topics, including preparations for the upcoming school year, which some experts judged as Kremlin support for Zyazikov. Enver Kisreyev, head of the Caucasus Section at the Russian Academy of Sciences Center of Civilizations and Regional Studies, and Grigoriy Shvedov, editor in chief of the Caucasian Knot website, did not foresee the opposition's demands being met.

Political Response

16. (SBU) Chairman of the Duma Committee on Civil, Criminal, Audit, and Procedural Legislation Pavel Krasheninikov called for a speedy investigation and public release of its findings. Ingushetian officials largely ignored the events on September 1. Zyazikov called the killing a tragedy and reported that all law enforcement agencies were taking all necessary measures in investigating the case. However, Ingushetia's press service refused to comment on Yevloyev's death, and on the Ingushetian government website, visitors were greeted with information about Ingushetia's Day of Knowledge (Note: September 1 was the first day of school in Russia).

17. (SBU) Opposition parties in Russia uniformly decried Yevloyev's murder. Union of Right Forces (SPS) leader Nikita Belykh stated that authorities in Russia, and in Ingushetia in particular, felt a sense of impunity and see themselves above the law and human morality. He added that "what

happened here was either by decree, or according to the wishes of the Ingushetian president." SPS also released a statement calling for Zyazikov's removal from office, even if only during the investigation. Yabloko leaders similarly called for government leaders to oversee a complete investigation into the journalist's murder.

Expert Opinions

18. (C) Yuriy Mikheev, senior aide to Russia Human Rights Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin, told us on September 2 that his office does not have any jurisdiction in the Yevloyev case and, at this point, the case still remains under investigation. While Lukin did not have any authority to intervene at this point, Mikheev stated that if a request or complaint arose about the process, or if authorities committed a violation of investigative procedures or standards, then Lukin would consider stepping in. Until that point, the office will continue to observe and monitor the situation closely. Moscow Human Rights Bureau (MBHR) Executive Director Natalya Rykova told us that only one option existed for the Kremlin in the wake of Yevloyev's murder: a full condemnation of those that committed the murder, regardless of the intent, because it occurred under the hands of government officials. While Rykova could not offer additional details, she noted that the MBHR would publish a report on events in Nazran late on September 2. Human Rights Watch - Russia Director Allison Gill piled on her criticism of events as well, adding that all of her contacts viewed with skepticism all official accounts of Yevloyev's death as accidental.

19. (SBU) Institute of National Strategy founder Stanislav Belkovsky stated that the Ingush people placed blame for Yevloyev's murder on Zyazikov; however, he added that the Kremlin could not call for Zyazikov's removal as it would serve as "too large a concession to the Ingushetian opposition." Belkovsky predicted that Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov would probably, once again, offer his services to the Kremlin to "restore order" under the guise of a joint Chechnya-Ingushetia Republic. Whether the guilty are punished largely depends on Zyazikov's fate as president, he added. Additionally, Moscow Helsinki Group North Caucasus expert Aslambek Apayev challenged all Russian human rights defenders to call for government accountability, joining Human Rights Watch's call for a thorough investigation of all factors. Oleg Orlov of Memorial called Yevloyev's murder "an act of state terror," describing it as a political murder conducted as the world shifts focus to South Ossetia. Institute for Strategic Appraisals and Analysis President Aleksandra Konovalova offered that there is no rational explanation for why the Kremlin supports Zyazikov, considering that things are now on the brink of explosion. In her opinion, the only way to quell potential disruptions would be to restore Ruslan Aushev to the presidency, as the most important thing is for the Kremlin to save the republic from another outbreak of violence.

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